

The Massachusetts Early Education and Care Professional Development System Study: Year 1 Report Overview

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Study Description

Effective professional development systems are critical to improving the quality of early education and care. This study examined the implementation of Massachusetts' new professional development system.

In 2010 Massachusetts created a new statewide integrated professional development system for the early education and care workforce. Six cross-sector regional professional development partnerships were formed (and funded by the MA Department of Early Education and Care, EEC) to design and deliver professional development services that included: educator and provider planning, coaching and mentoring, and competency development.

Research questions

This study addressed two broad research questions:

- How does Massachusetts, along with its six newly-funded Regional Partnerships, implement a new professional development system to serve the diverse set of providers in each region?
- How is this system change implemented to develop a consistent and stable infrastructure with common goals and expectations shared by EEC and the six regional partnerships?

Research Methods

Data for this qualitative implementation study were collected between August 2010 and June 2011.

The research team conducted a total of 55 interviews with regional leads and partners, 5 interviews with EEC staff members, observed 27 regional and statewide meetings, and reviewed regional and state policy and planning documents. In addition, an online survey of the regional interview participants was conducted mid-year to share preliminary data and gather feedback on the data from participants. Qualitative analysis methods were used to analyze data by region, and then across regions and with the statewide data.

Results Summary

The results of this study highlight the unique partnership the state created with regional professional development partnerships, and the successes and challenges of creating an integrated, cross-sector system.

The changes implemented this year represent a significant transformation of professional development policy and practice that was widely acknowledged by study participants at the state and local levels.

This study indicates that the transformative change from prior professional development

practice and infrastructure required an intensive focus of time and energy on the part of both the state agency and the regional professional development partnerships. New systems for governance, communication, and accountability were developed.

Implications for policy and practice

This study's findings suggest the following recommendations to support continued focus and development of the system:

1. *Assess access and engagement* of providers and educators working in programs serving high-need children; family child care providers, and educators who are English Language Learners.
2. *Strengthen alignment* by increasing understanding about how to align the regional professional development system with QRIS and individual professional development plans and pathways.
3. *Engage program directors* in supporting the professional development of their staff.
4. *Support development of regional partnerships.* Continue efforts to define the scope and role of regional partnerships and EEC in regards to professional development practices and the development of innovations

to advance the field; continue efforts to foster reciprocal communication between EEC and regional partnerships to mutually inform policy and practice.

5. *Increase access to and use of data* at the regional and state levels to evaluate outcomes and for continuous quality improvement; in the long term, develop capacity to assess educator competencies and the use of educator assessment in a continuous cycle to inform professional development service planning and delivery.

For more information

The full report is posted on the MA Department of Early Education and Care website at:

http://www.eec.state.ma.us/docs1/prof_devel/20110827_umass_pds_rpt.pdf

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